

# Introduction to Political Participation Research

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Summer Semester, 2024

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Class Room: Bergheimer Str. 58, Room 02.034 Class Hours: Tuesdays 18:15-19:45

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## Description

Democracy depends on the active participation of engaged citizens in electing their representatives and shaping the political landscape by holding policymakers accountable. However, forms of political engagement are constantly expanding as citizens and organizations seek to innovate their repertoire of participation. The first part of the seminar will discuss the conceptual and empirical challenge of defining and measuring political participation. We will distinguish and review quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of political participation. Since citizen participation empowers and sets the agenda of governing institutions and elected officials, those who participate directly affect inequalities in whose interests are represented. The second part of the seminar is devoted to this question and examines the predictors of political participation. We examine the role of socio-demographic, attitudinal, and value-based differences in driving political engagement. We also organize an in-class debate on the advantages and disadvantages of mandatory voting. Despite their importance, differences between individual citizens only partly explain patterns of political participation. The final three sessions of the seminar discuss the role of the issue, organizational, and national contexts in influencing the extent and form of political participation.

## Course Objectives

This seminar is designed for BA students. The seminar assumes no previous knowledge of the literature. By the end of the seminar, students:

1. will familiarize themselves with the main theoretical approaches in the study of political participation
2. will familiarize themselves with the main methodological approaches in the study of political participation
3. will be able to evaluate research related to political participation

4. will be able to pose a research question related to the themes of the seminar
5. will be able to argue with the analytical concepts learned in the seminar

## Course Requirements

Weekly attendance is desired. If you cannot attend, please email me before the respective session.

For 2 credit points	For 2 + 6 credit points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active participation in class</li> <li>• Reading the literature</li> <li>• Doing (group) exercises</li> <li>• <b>In-class presentation (15 mins)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active participation in class</li> <li>• Reading the literature</li> <li>• Doing (group) exercises</li> <li>• <b>In-class presentation (15 mins)</b></li> <li>• <b>Term paper (5000 words)</b></li> </ul>

## Office Hours

I offer my office hours based on prior agreement. Email me if you would like to meet. To sign up for an office hour, you might need to make an appointment using Calendly: <https://calendly.com/endre-borbath/office-hour>

We can meet on-site, in room 03.033 (Bergheimer Str. 58, 69115 Heidelberg) or online, using the heiCONF link: <https://heiconf.uni-heidelberg.de/tgad-fzyq-7j9g-zcdh>

## Online Learning

I provide the course literature via Moodle (<https://moodle.uni-heidelberg.de/>) and also use the platform for general course information. Please contact me with any questions regarding the course literature, technical problems with Moodle, or other organizational issues.

## Student Presentations and Final Paper

### Presentations

Every student receiving credit points for the seminar must present in one of the sessions. The presentation is on the theme of the respective session. Therefore, it should reflect on **all readings assigned for the respective week**. We divide up the presentations during the first session.

The presentation should be **no longer than 15 minutes**. You are asked to email me your slides **before the session** so I can save them on the laptop we use in class. The presentations will also be uploaded to Moodle and made available to all students in class.

A successful presentation addresses the following points:

- What is the central research question of the respective study?

- Is the study's contribution theoretical, empirical, or both?
- What are the main theoretical propositions advanced by the study?
- In case of an empirical study: what research design and methods do the authors use to examine their research question? Do these fit the theoretical ambition? Does the empirical evidence provide enough support for the thesis the authors advance?
- In case it is a theoretical study: what debate does the study contribute to? What are the central theoretical ideas introduced? What are the key analytical concepts introduced? Do these travel beyond the context of the respective study?
- What is the central comparison the study relies on? Both in theoretical terms (different scholarly traditions) and empirical terms (space, time, meso-level actors, individuals, etc.)
- How does this study relate to the overall theme of the seminar and other readings we have previously discussed?
- How do you evaluate the study? Do you find it convincing? If so, why? Or why not?

## Term Paper

A term paper comprises 5000 words, including references. The deadline for this paper is the end of the summer term, **the 30th of September 2024**. The paper is the final 'product' of the seminar, allowing you to showcase what you have learned throughout the semester. **The term paper should present a central thesis in an argumentative form.** This is the critical requirement for how the papers will be assessed. You are encouraged to discuss the topic of your paper with me in advance!

**There are usually three types of papers: 1) a literature review, 2) the analysis of an empirical case, or 3) a book review.** In the first type of paper, the student makes a theoretical proposition, often a set of hypotheses based on a critical review of a relevant strand of literature. In addition to what we have discussed in the seminar, the paper should also refer to further reading. To the extent possible, it should go beyond summarising existing studies by critically engaging with them and using the debate to frame an original argument or a set of hypotheses. You can also think of this type of term paper as the first part of a journal article, containing the introduction and the theoretical/ analytical framework but not the empirical analysis.

The second type of paper provides an overview of an empirical case. This case would typically be participation in a specific context (critical election or a wave of protest mobilization) or form (online, offline, etc.). In this type of paper, the student applies the analytical framework and theoretical approaches reviewed in the seminar to classify the case they are examining and to tease out a 'message' about what the case teaches us. The guiding question is: What is this case about? In order to answer this question, the essay should reflect on the classification of the case from a comparative, generalizable perspective.

The third type of paper is a review of a book published in the last 15 years by a major university press on a topic related to the seminar. A book review is expected to summarise the book's central argument, review the structure in which the argument is presented, and consider the extent to which the empirical evidence supports the main argument. A vital element of a successful review is to situate the book within relevant debates/literature. The purpose of this is to assess whether

the contribution the book claims to make is indeed new to the literature and to what extent it represents a ‘breakthrough’ or an incremental step in relevant debates. Reading some existing reviews to familiarise yourself with the genre may be helpful. Three journals that regularly publish book reviews are *Comparative Political Studies*, *Party Politics*, and *Social Movement Studies*.

## Academic Writing and Reading

I strongly recommend taking part in the academic writing course offered by the Heidelberg University (Institute for German as a Foreign Language Philology). For more information, see: <https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/en/study/advisory-services/service-and-events-of-the-international-relations-office/academic-writing-english-spoken-offer>

### On writing research papers:

Minkoff, Scott L. 2012. “A Guide to Developing and Writing Research Papers in Political Science,” [https://kevinlyles.digital.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/minkoff\\_researchpaper\\_guide\\_v4.pdf](https://kevinlyles.digital.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/minkoff_researchpaper_guide_v4.pdf).

### On writing a good abstract:

Gilardi, Fabrizio. 2021. “Good Abstracts: A Template,” <https://www.fabriziogilardi.org/resources/papers/good-abstracts.pdf>.

### Templates for writing:

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. 2018. *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. Fourth edition. New York: W. W. Norton. ISBN: 0-393-63167-2. <https://tinyurl.com/bdec4eex>.

### On reading efficiently:

Pacheco-Vega, Raul. 2020. “Reading Strategies,” <http://www.raulpacheco.org/resources/reading-strategies>.

Note: Raul Pacheco-Vega’s blog is a valuable resource for academic writing in general!

### Software recommendation:

I use Google Scholar and Zotero (freely available) for literature search. For note-taking, I use Obsidian (freely available). I recommend that you learn how to use these software (or their alternatives), as the investment pays off later during your studies. YouTube has many videos introducing Zotero and Obsidian’s different elements. I am also happy to help if you have questions.

## Academic Integrity and Mental Health

### Plagiarism

Students must comply with the university policy on academic integrity found at <https://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/en/service/detecting-plagiarism>. In addition, please also familiarize yourself with the Study Guide [https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/politikwissenschaften/bachelor\\_recht.html](https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/politikwissenschaften/bachelor_recht.html). Not knowing the rules is no excuse for plagiarism!

## Use of AI

If you use AI (chatGPT, Claude, etc.) to write your term paper, you are required to be transparent about it. More specifically, list the prompts and answers in a separate appendix at the end of the term paper. This appendix does not count towards the word count. You do not need to list the use of AI for coding, data analysis, and grammar corrections (e.g., DeepL Write, Grammarly, etc.). Please remember always to respect the rules of academic integrity and honesty!

## Mental Health

Many students feel overwhelmed by the tasks and responsibilities during their studies, mainly if they are new to Germany and Heidelberg. That is normal! If you feel that you are not able to cope alone, please consider approaching the psychosocial counseling service offered free of charge by the student services organization at <https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/en/study/advisory-services/psychosocial-counselling-for-students-pcs>. If you are having difficulties, e.g., with the term paper, please do not hesitate to approach me.

## Schedule and Readings

### Week 1, 16.04.2024 - Introducing the seminar

- Introduce the syllabus
- Clarify expectations
- Divide up the presentations

### Week 2, 23.04.2024 - Conceptualizing political participation

- Why is political participation important?
- In what forms do we participate in politics?

#### Required:

Dalton, Russell J. 2014. "Chapter 3: How We Participate?" In *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, 6th edition, 37–62. London, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-4522-0300-3.

#### Recommended:

Deth, Jan W. van. 2014. "A conceptual map of political participation." *Acta Politica* 49 (3): 349–367. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2014.6>.

**Week 3, 30.04.2024 - Electoral participation: quantitative approaches in the study of voting**

- Why is electoral turnout relevant?
- How is turnout studied from a quantitative perspective?

**Required:**

Geys, Benny. 2006. "Explaining voter turnout: A review of aggregate-level research." *Electoral Studies* 25 (4): 637–663. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2005.09.002>.

**Recommended:**

Mellon, Jonathan, Geoffrey Evans, Edward A. Fieldhouse, Jane Green, and Christopher Prosser. 2018. "Aggregate Turnout Is Mismeasured." *SSRN Scholarly Paper*, no. 3098436, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3098436>.

DeBell, Matthew, Jon A. Krosnick, Katie Gera, David S. Yeager, and Michael P. McDonald. 2020. "The Turnout Gap in Surveys: Explanations and Solutions." *Sociological Methods & Research* 49 (4): 1133–1162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124118769085>.

**Week 4, 07.05.2024 - Electoral participation: qualitative approaches in the study of voting**

- How to study voters using qualitative methods?
- How to interview supporters of the radical right?

**Required:**

Off, Gefjon. 2024. "Multidimensional and intersectional cultural grievances over gender, sexuality and immigration." *European Journal of Political Research* online first. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12665>.

**Recommended:**

Damhuis, Koen, and Léonie de Jonge. 2022. "Going Nativist. How to Interview the Radical Right?" *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* online first. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221077761>.

**Week 5, 14.05.2024 - Non-electoral participation: quantitative approaches in the study of demonstrations**

- How to study demonstrations and participants in demonstrations using quantitative methods?
- How is demonstrating related to voting?

**Required:**

Borbáth, Endre, and Swen Hutter. 2022. "Bridging Electoral and Nonelectoral Political Participation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Participation*, edited by Maria T. Grasso and Marco Giugni, 451–467. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-886112-6.

**Recommended:**

Daphi, Priska, Sebastian Haunss, Moritz Sommer, and Simon Teune. 2023. "Taking to the Streets in Germany – Disenchanted and Confident Critics in Mass Demonstrations." *German Politics* 32 (3): 440–468. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2021.1998459>.

**Week 6, 21.05.2024 - Non-electoral participation: qualitative approaches in the study of activism**

- How to study demonstrations and participants in demonstrations using qualitative methods?
- What does interviewing activists of the climate movement tell us?

**Required:**

Staggenborg, Suzanne. 2022. "Studying a Movement Up Close: Grassroots Environmentalism." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 27 (1): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671X-27-1-1>.

**Recommended:**

Kleres, Jochen, and Åsa Wettergren. 2017. "Fear, hope, anger, and guilt in climate activism." *Social Movement Studies* 16 (5): 507–519. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2017.1344546>.

**Week 7, 28.05.2024 - On-line forms of participation**

- To what extent are online forms of participation empirically distinguished from offline forms?
- How to study online participation using quantitative and qualitative methods?

**Required:**

Theocharis, Yannis, and Jan W. van Deth. 2018. "The continuous expansion of citizen participation: a new taxonomy." *European Political Science Review* 10 (1): 139–163. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773916000230>.

**Recommended:**

Gagnon, Audrey. 2024. "Going Offline or Staying Online? Identity and Stigma as (De)Motivators for Mobilization in Radical Right Movements." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 29 (1): 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671X-29-1-41>.

**Week 8, 04.06.2024 - Who participates in politics?**

- What are the main predictors of participation?
- How does that change depending on the form of participation?

**Required:**

Teorell, Jan, Paul Sum, and Mette Tobiasen. 2007. "Participation and political equality. An assessment of large-scale democracy." In *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies: A Comparative Analysis*, edited by Jan W. Van Deth, Jose Ramon Montero, and Anders Westholm, 384–414. London; New York: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-415-47960-8.

**Recommended:**

Van Aelst, Peter, and Stefaan Walgrave. 2001. "Who is that (wo)man in the street? From the normalisation of protest to the normalisation of the protester." *European Journal of Political Research* 39 (4): 461–486. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.00582>.

**Week 9, 11.06.2024 - Attitudinal drivers of participation**

- What are the main attitudinal predictors of voting?
- How does that change between and within individuals?

**Required:**

Franklin, Mark N. 2004a. "Introduction." In *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*, 1–8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-0-511-21217-8.

———. 2004b. "The Turnout Puzzles Revisited." In *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*, 201–224. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-0-511-21217-8.

**Recommended:**

Prior, Markus. 2010. "You've Either Got It or You Don't? The Stability of Political Interest over the Life Cycle." *The Journal of Politics* 72 (3): 747–766. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381610000149>.

**Week 10, 18.06.2024 - In-class debate: mandatory voting**

- Proposition: Participating in elections should be made mandatory for all citizens.

**Required:**

Lijphart, Arend. 1997. "Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma." *The American Political Science Review* 91 (1): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952255>.

**Recommended:**

Kostadinova, Tatiana, and Timothy J. Power. 2007. "Does Democratization Depress Participation?: Voter Turnout in the Latin American and Eastern European Transitional Democracies." *Political Research Quarterly* 60 (3): 363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907304154>.

Aytaç, Selim Erdem, and Susan Carol Stokes. 2022. "Costly Abstention." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Participation*, edited by Maria T. Grasso and Marco Giugni, 763–780. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-886112-6.

**Week 11, 25.06.2024 - Values, skills and political participation**

- What are the main values associated with different forms of participation?
- How does that change between generations?
- What role does the field of education play in political behavior?

**Required:**

Dalton, Russell J. 2008. "Citizenship Norms and the Expansion of Political Participation." *Political Studies* 56 (1): 76–98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00718.x>.

**Recommended:**

Hooghe, Liesbet, Gary Marks, and Jonne Kamphorst. 2024. "Why It Makes Sense to Consider Field of Education to Predict Political Behavior: The Case of Gal/Tan Voting." *American Political Science Review* forthcoming. [https://hooghe.web.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/11492/2024/03/Hooghe-Marks-Kamphorst\\_field-of-education.pdf](https://hooghe.web.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/11492/2024/03/Hooghe-Marks-Kamphorst_field-of-education.pdf).

**Week 12, 02.07.2024 - Issue context of participation**

- What role does the issue context play in influencing participation?
- How can we account for that in individual-level analysis?

**Required:**

Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2008. "Political Mobilisation, Political Participation and the Power of the Vote." *West European Politics* 31 (1–2): 147–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380701834762>.

**Recommended:**

Borbáth, Endre. 2023. "Differentiation in Protest Politics: Participation by Political Insiders and Outsiders." *Political Behavior* online first. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-022-09846-7>.

**Week 13, 09.07.2024 - Organizational context of participation**

- What role does the organizational context play in influencing mobilization?

**Required:**

Giugni, Marco, and Maria Grasso. 2021. "Party membership and social movement activism: A macro–micro analysis." *Party Politics* 27 (1): 92–102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818823446>.

**Recommended:**

Kitschelt, Herbert. 2006. "Movement Parties." In *Handbook of party politics*, edited by Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty, 278–290. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE. ISBN: 978-0-7619-4314-3.

**Week 14, 16.07.2024 - National context of participation**

- What is the role of the national context in influencing who participates in politics?
- What are the main differences between Western and Central and Eastern Europe?

**Required:**

Welzel, Christian, and Franziska Deutsch. 2012. "Emancipative Values and Non-Violent Protest: The Importance of 'Ecological' Effects." *British Journal of Political Science* 42 (2): 465–479. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123411000421>.

**Recommended:**

Kostelka, Filip. 2014. "The State of Political Participation in Post-Communist Democracies: Low but Surprisingly Little Biased Citizen Engagement." *Europe-Asia Studies* 66 (6): 945–968. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2014.905386>.

**Week 15, 23.07.2024 - Concluding discussion**

- Roundtable/ feedback round: What did we learn from the seminar?